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Elections to fill vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections: election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 27 March 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to inform him that Switzerland has decided to put forward its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council during the election to be held at the sixtieth session of the General Assembly, on 9 May 2006.

Switzerland warmly welcomed the establishment of the new Human Rights Council and intends to do everything in its power to ensure that the Council becomes a strong and effective body, capable of promoting and protecting all human rights everywhere in the world. As it has indicated on numerous occasions, it will make offices available to States not represented in Geneva which wish to participate in the work of the Council.

Respect for human rights is deeply rooted in Switzerland's traditions and in its Federal Constitution. Switzerland is fully committed to upholding the highest standards in the promotion and protection of human rights and continues to pursue at the national, regional and global levels an active human rights policy consistent with international law and following a rights-based approach.

While Switzerland never had the opportunity to sit on the Commission on Human Rights, it constantly contributed to the Commission's work in its capacity as observer. It took an active and constructive part in the negotiations leading to the adoption of resolution 60/251.

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Annex to the note verbale dated 27 March 2006 from the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: French]

The Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and has the honour to refer to its note verbale dated 27 March 2006, in which it informed him that Switzerland had announced its candidacy for membership of the Human Rights Council.

In accordance with resolution 60/251, Switzerland has prepared a document outlining its efforts to promote human rights and the voluntary contributions and pledges it intends to make.

Switzerland would be grateful if the United Nations Secretariat would circulate this document and its enclosure (note verbale and pledges) as a document of the General Assembly.

Enclosure

[Original: Arabic, English, French and Spanish]

Switzerland and the Human Rights Council

Voluntary pledges and commitments in accordance with Resolution 60/251

The Swiss Government undertakes to :

1. **Fully cooperate with the Human Rights Council in order to make it a strong, efficient and fair UN Human Rights body**

   - By actively participating in the work of the Council in a spirit of cooperation, inclusiveness and genuine dialogue and readiness to be submitted to the universal periodic review;
   - By ensuring effective responses to human rights violations wherever they occur and by contributing to the standard-setting work of the Council;
   - By engaging in a constructive reflection on the modalities and mandates of the Council as foreseen in Resolution A/RES/60/251, including the strengthening of the system of Special Procedures and other expert mechanisms of the Council;
   - By a strong commitment to the realisation of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, on an equal footing;
   - By seeking dialogue with non-members of the Council, regional organizations and civil society as well as improving the engagement of NGOs with the Council.

2. **Reaffirm its support to the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights and other relevant UN Funds, Programmes and bodies**

   - By continuing its close collaboration and dialogue with OHCHR and by maintaining at the moment the current level of financial support;
   - By promoting a human rights based approach to development in its support to UN operational activities and its engagement in the governing bodies of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA, UNAIDS, UNIFEM as well as WHO and FAO.
   - By working towards the better integration of human rights, transitional justice and rule of law activities in the work of the UN Peacebuilding Commission and by organizing in 2006 a workshop about a study on "human rights and peace agreements".

- By contributing to the ongoing reform of the treaty body system and in particular by evaluating the usefulness of an expanded common core document complemented by specific reports to each of the treaty bodies;

- By developing and supporting the updating of a country-by-country "Human Rights Index", which is based on UN official documents and will be accessible to everybody as a useful reference and information tool.

3. **Advance human rights on an international level**

- By encouraging States who have not yet done so to ratify the core international human rights instruments;

- By supporting States in their implementation of human rights obligations through human rights dialogues, exchange of experts, technical cooperation and advice;

- By contributing through the Swiss development cooperation to the promotion and protection of human rights, democracy and good governance in the majority of its partner countries;

- By contributing to the process of identifying and clarifying standards for corporate responsibility and accountability with regard to human rights and business.

4. **Advance human rights on a national level**

- By cooperating fully with the Special Procedures of the Council, including by upholding the standing invitation to all Special Procedures issued in April 2002 and facilitating all the necessary arrangements for their visits.

- By continuing to effectively implement its human rights obligations at federal and cantonal level, and to make every actor of society, i.e. the government, the private sector and civil society, aware of the need to respect human rights through information, training and awareness-raising.

- By examining the withdrawal of its reservations made to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights as well as to the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

- By ratifying in the near future the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC-OP2), which Switzerland signed in 2000;

- By considering the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture, which Switzerland signed June 2004;

- By considering signing the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention;

- By ratifying in the near future the Additional Protocol III to the Four Geneva Conventions;

- By cooperating fully with the treaty monitoring bodies, including by submitting periodic reports on time, and acting promptly and in good faith on their concluding observations and recommendations.

Internet links to relevant Swiss official websites

Priorities of Swiss Human Rights Policy :

http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/e/home/foreign/humsec/humrig.html

- Human Rights report of the Swiss government 2000 :

http://www.admin.ch/ch/f/ff/2000/2460.pdf

- Human Rights and Development Cooperation :

http://www.sdc.admin.ch

- Switzerland and the United Nations :

http://www.eda.admin.ch/sub_uno/e/uno.html